

Environmental Modifications

Definition: Those physical adaptations to the individual's primary residence, required by the individual's plan of care, which are necessary to ensure the health, welfare and safety of the individual, or which enable the individual to function with greater independence, and without which, the individual would require institutionalization. Home is defined as non-government subsidized living quarters and modifications to any government subsidized housing (i.e., group homes or community residential care facilities) are not permitted. Such adaptations may include the installation of ramps and grab-bars, widening of doorways, modification of bathroom facilities, or installation of specialized electric and plumbing systems, which are necessary to accommodate the medical equipment and supplies which are necessary for the welfare of the individual. Environmental Modifications may also include consultation and assessments to determine the specific needs and follow-up inspections upon completion of the project.

Excluded are those adaptations or improvements to the home which are of general utility, and are not of direct medical or remedial benefit to the individual, such as carpeting, painting, roof repair, central air conditioning, etc. Adaptations that add square footage to the home are excluded from this benefit. All services shall be provided in accordance with applicable State or local building codes. Approval of a request for environmental modification is a multi-step process. The modification is initially determined by you based on the individual's need as documented in the plan of care. Three bids for the modification are obtained by you and submitted with documentation of the need. The consultation/assessment does not require the submission of bids. This information is reviewed by South Carolina Department of Disabilities and Special Needs (SCDDSN) staff for programmatic integrity and cost effectiveness.

Please note: Environmental modifications are not intended to provide financial assistance for any phase of new home construction or major home renovation projects. Routine and one-time home maintenance is the sole responsibility of the homeowner or landlord (e.g. siding, repairs/replacement, gutter work, foundation repair, electrical wiring problems, etc.)

The following are examples of possible adaptations that may be done as a part of Environmental Modifications (this list is not all inclusive):

- installation of a ramp to facilitate safe and easy entering and exiting of the home.
- installation of grab-bars.
- porch lift to facilitate safe and easy entering and exiting of the home (in certain situations a porch lift can be more feasible and cost effective than extensive ramping).
- widening of doorways to allow functional entry into the home, bathroom, bedrooms, etc.
- flooring modifications to facilitate easier propelling of a manual wheelchair (e.g. carpet is replaced with vinyl floor covering).
- modification of bathroom facilities to provide a more accessible means of maintaining personal hygiene, and better independence and safety in bathing and grooming (e.g. wider bathroom door with lever hardware, a roll-in shower with customized grab bars, roll-under sink, etc.).
- installation of specialized electric and plumbing systems which are necessary to accommodate the medical equipment and supplies which are necessary for the welfare of the individual.

Providers: Contractors licensed by the State of South Carolina through the SC Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation, Contractor's Licensing Board or those enrolled with SCDHHS to provide Environmental Modifications.

Environmental Assessments/Consultations must be provided by licensed DDSN Qualified and/or Medicaid enrolled Occupational or Physical Therapists, Rehabilitation Engineering Technologists, Assistive Technology Practitioners and Assistive Technology Suppliers certified by the Rehabilitation Engineering Society of North American (RESNA), and Environmental Access/Consultants/contractors certified by Professional Resource in Management (PRIME).

Arranging for the Service: When modifications are thought to be needed and before proceeding with bid requests, the **Environmental Modifications Fact Sheet for Individuals Who Live in Privately Owned or Rented Homes (Community Supports Info Sheet-2)** must be given to the individual and/or legal guardian. The information included in this fact sheet should be explained fully.

Once the individual's specific need has been identified and documented in the Plan and it is determined that Environmental Modification is the appropriate service to meet the need, the scope of the work/specifications must be determined. This should be done in consultation with the individual and/or family and should define the expected modification as clearly as possible. There are two ways to accomplish this task:

1. You can define the expected modifications by meeting with the individual/family in their home, reviewing the modifications that are needed, and developing some parameters in writing to provide to the contractors submitting bids. This is a crucial step to ensure that all requested contractor bids are based on similar expectations (e.g. for someone who cannot access their bathroom, the contractor would need to take into account the dimensions of the individual's wheelchair).

OR

2. The expected modifications can also be defined by obtaining an Environmental Modification Consultation by using part of the individual cost limit. An Environmental Modification Consultation is highly recommended when multiple modifications need to be completed and the individual/family is unsure how to proceed with making changes to their home in order to meet the individual's needs. (The cost will count against the individual cost limit)

The written specifications that are developed, either by you or by an independent consultant, must be provided to the contractors when requesting bids and each contractor's bid must be based on the specifications. When completing these specifications, you cannot assume that the provider has experience working with individuals with physical disabilities.

Environmental Modification Consultations are requested by entering the cost for the consultation onto the Waiver Tracking System under Environmental Modifications (S26). Consultations do not require the submission of bids; however, the cost cannot exceed \$600.00/consultation. Once approved, the consultation must be authorized using the **Authorization for Service (Community Supports Form EM-8)** which directs the provider to bill the local DSN Board. Consultations **cannot** be billed directly to South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services.

Once the scope of the modification has been determined and put in writing either by you or independent consultation, a listing of available contractors should be shared with the individual/family

or the individual should be made aware of the qualifications for contractors and asked to select contractors to give at list three written bids. This offering of choice of provider must be documented in the individual's file.

When obtaining written bids for needed environmental modifications, if the modifications include a ramp, ramp repair, widening of doorways and/or interior floor surface modifications, the requirements noted below must be adhered to when the contractor is preparing the bid and later when the project is initiated and completed. This information must be given to the individual and/or family and must be provided to the contractors when requesting at least three written bids. Furthermore, the written specifications for the project that were developed with the individual/family by you or independent consultant must be provided to each contractor and each contractor's bid must be based on these specifications.

1. Ramps

Any ramp that is contracted through the Community Supports Waiver must meet the following minimum requirements or comply with ANSI A117.1-1998.

Materials: The use of treated lumber (rated for ground contact) is required throughout the ramp (local building codes may be more specific as to the level of treatment in the lumber). Earth berming, used in conjunction with ramping is permissible due to uneven terrain.

Width: The usable platform width of all ramps must be a minimum of 36" (thirty-six inches).

Slope: The slope or grade of the ramp must be no less than 1' (one foot) of linear ramp for every 1" (one inch) of height that is to be ascended.

Designs: Fold-back (180 degree or 90 degree) turn designs are permissible. At each point where the ramp's direction changes there must be a functional turning platform with adequate space for the individual's mobility device to safely brake and/or change directions.

Wheelchair Turning Platforms/Landings: All turning platforms or "landings" (usually at the top end of the ramp or where the ramp changes directions) that lead directly into the home must be a minimum of 5' x 5' (five feet by five feet) for a safe functional space to turn and enter the home. At any exterior entry/exit door, the turning platform should start at the hinged side of the door and extend beyond the latch side of the door to best utilize the available space to turn and maneuver a wheelchair.

Decking Material: All decking boards must be of sufficient thickness to maximize strength, provide stability, and maximize the life of the ramp.

Railings: All ramps should include handrails with pickets or other designs that will prevent wheelchairs from accidentally rolling off the sloped surface of the ramp.

Support Structures: Where it is necessary such as soft grass, soil, sand, loose gravel or muddy areas, or as local building codes dictate, all the ramp support posts and turning platform support posts shall be set in concrete for long-term stability.

Landing Pads: At the lower or ground end of the ramp, and where necessary such as soft grass, soil, sand, loose gravel or muddy areas, ramps shall include a concrete minimum 4'x4' (four feet by four

feet) landing pad, for function and safety. Ramps that end, for example, onto a hardened surface or a concrete driveway usually do not require a concrete landing pad.

Repairs to Existing Ramps

If the project is to simply repair an existing ramp that is in unsatisfactory condition, the repairs must not in any way bring a ramp out of accessibility compliance regulations or exceed the cost of replacing the ramp with a new one.

2. Widening Doorways/Installing Door Hardware

Width: Whenever possible, a doorway must always be expanded to three (3) feet (or a 3'0" doorway). The 3 (three) foot door allows better function for a wider variety of mobility devices and can usually accommodate upgraded wheelchair prescriptions. In some cases existing architectural designs may circumvent widening the door to a full three (3) feet. This should be brought to the attention of the Service Coordinator at any time prior to authorization of the project.

Lever door hardware: Lever-type door hardware must always be used when individuals have limited hand/finger dexterity. In some cases the custom mounting of large "D" pull-type handles might be necessary to maximize one's independence in opening and closing doors. For individuals with limited finger dexterity, locks for bedroom/bathroom doors should be the push-to-lock design.

Thresholds: When doorways are widened, thresholds should be kept to a minimum of ½ inch or less, to prevent a barrier for those individuals who use manual wheelchairs and/or shower chairs.

3. Interior Floor Surface Modifications

Typically this means removing the existing carpet in certain essential areas of the home and replacing it with vinyl flooring. Sometimes this is done in conjunction with a complex bathroom modification to facilitate easier wheelchair maneuvering directly associated with the ADL related to personal hygiene and safety. **This modification is not intended to provide floor surface replacement for an entire home or use more expensive materials such as hardwood.**

Obtaining Bids:

- Any purchase up to \$2500.00 does not require securing competitive written bids.
- Any purchase from \$2500.00 to \$10,000 requires the verbal solicitation of three (3) different written bids. **A "no-bid" response is accepted as part of the solicitation process.**
- Any purchase over \$10,000.00 requires the written solicitation of bids, from various providers, and the project must be advertised following the procurement policy.

You should assist the family as needed in scheduling and arranging for written bids from contractors. When needed, three (3) written bids must be obtained and submitted to SCDDSN in accordance with State Procurement and SCDDSN Directive 250-08-DD for approval before any work can be authorized. If three written bids could not be obtained, you should submit any actual written bids received along with documentation to include a list of the contractors the family requested written bids from whom did not comply.

When a bid is received the **Acknowledgement of Bid Submission for Environmental Modifications (Community Supports Form 59)** must be completed and forwarded to the Provider/Contractor that

submitted the bid. This must be done for each bid you receive. This communication notifies the provider/contractor that you have received their bid and they cannot proceed with beginning services without written authorization from you.

When the three (3) written bids are submitted, the costs for the modification should be entered into the Waiver Tracking System (S26). In all cases, the lowest bid must be indicated. In all cases, the award will be made to the lowest responsive and responsible bidder. If a bid is submitted from a contractor that has been debarred by the State of South Carolina Materials Management Office, then the bid will be dismissed and a new bid will have to be obtained.

If the individual/legal guardian has communicated concerns and issues about using the lowest bidder that involve possible bad references, proof of faulty work, complaints from the Better Business Bureau, etc. you must submit in writing the reasons and concerns that the individual/legal guardian has about the provider. SCDDSN Central Office staff will examine this information and if legitimate, documented and substantiated concerns are noted, this information will be reported to the State of South Carolina Materials Management Office. The State of South Carolina Materials Management Office will review this information and if they concur the vendor will be debarred. However, this decision will not impact the use of this provider/contractor for this particular project.

Please Note:

There is often a problem with written quotes being more than sixty (60) calendar days old. Since the cost of materials may vary from month to month, a bidder may not honor a written quote after thirty (30) or sixty (60) calendar days. You must assure all bids submitted to SCDDSN Central Office for review are current and valid. This may require contacting bidders for confirmation before submitting quotes to SCDDSN Central Office.

Once the request for the modification has been approved on the Waiver Tracking System, the individual/legal guardian must be presented with the **Environmental Modification Project Agreement (Community Supports Form 60)**, agree to its terms and sign it before services can be authorized. Once the form is signed, you can authorize the service.

Authorizing the Service: If the chosen provider is enrolled with SCDHHS and wishes to bill Medicaid directly for the modification, the **Authorization for Services (Community Supports Form EM-36)** should be used. Include a copy of the authorized bid and the Environmental Modification consultation, if applicable, with the authorization.

If the chosen provider is not enrolled with SCDHHS or prefers to bill the DSN board for the service, the **Authorization for Service (Community Supports Form EM-8)** should be used. Include a copy of the authorized bid and the Environmental Modification consultation, if applicable, with the authorization.

Please note: If the individual/legal guardian desires Environmental Modifications above the individual cost limit and can secure external and separate funding for those additional modifications, they can **privately** contract with the same professional/contractor. Any additional work portion funded by the family or other outside resources cannot be a part of the your written authorization. It must be a separate contract between the family and their chosen provider.

Please note: If any change is needed with the proposed modifications (change in specifications) during or after the solicitation of written bids, **the solicitation process must be stopped.** A written

amendment of the specifications must be completed and sent to all potential bidders who received the original specifications, so each has opportunity to respond to the amended solicitation. All bidders must submit a written bid on the written amended specifications so we can assure bidding is on identical project requirements. A copy of the written amendment to the specifications and the subsequent bids must be submitted to Central Office for internal review.

Please note: If the individual enters the hospital before the modification is initiated by the provider, you must suspend the service until the individual exits the hospital using the **Notice of Suspension of Service (Community Supports Form 16-C)**.

Monitoring the Services: You must monitor the effectiveness, benefits, and usefulness of the service along with the individual's/family's satisfaction with the service. The following schedule should be followed when monitoring Environmental Modifications.

- On site monitorship of completed modifications to verify that the work is complete, adequate, and satisfactory to the family within **two weeks** of completion.

Some items to consider during monitorship include:

- Has the modification begun? Is the individual satisfied with the work that has been done so far? Does the provider show the individual courtesy and respect when working in his/her home?
- Once the modification is complete: Was the modification completed as originally prescribed?
- Is it functional?
- Is the individual satisfied with the end result of the modification?
- How has it made his/her home more accessible and safe?
- Was he/she satisfied with the provider of the modifications?
- Did the provider show up at scheduled times and respect the wishes of the individual and his/her family?
- Are there additional needs that were included in the bid and the authorized modification that were not met by the provider?

Reduction, Suspension, or Termination of Services: If services need to be reduced, suspended, or terminated, a written notice must be forwarded to the individual or his/her legal guardian. Include the details regarding the change(s) in service and the Reconsideration and Appeal Information. You must wait ten (10) calendar days before proceeding with the reduction, suspension or termination of the service. See **Chapter 8** for specific details and procedures regarding written notification and the appeals process.

**S. C. DEPARTMENT OF DISABILITIES AND SPECIAL NEEDS
COMMUNITY SUPPORTS WAIVER**

**AUTHORIZATION FOR SERVICES
TO BE BILLED TO THE DSN BOARD**

TO: _____

RE: _____

Individual's Name

/

Date of Birth

Address

You are hereby authorized to provide the following service(s) to the person named above. Only the amount authorized may be billed. Please note: This nullifies any previous authorization to this provider for this service(s).

Environmental Modifications:

General Description: _____

Amount Authorized: \$ _____

Date of bid: _____ (Attach a copy of the bid and consultation, if appropriate)

Start date: _____

Consultation Amount Authorized: \$ _____ (not to exceed \$600.00)

REMIT BILL TO (Please print):

Signature of Person Authorizing Services

Date

Board Name/Address: _____



Community Supports Waiver

South Carolina Department of Disabilities and Special Needs

Environmental Modifications

Fact Sheet for Individuals Who Live in Privately Owned or Rented Homes

- Environmental modifications for people served through the Community Supports Waiver depend upon the individual's assessed needs and whether funding is available. Procurement law and regulations apply along with specific restrictions and limits since federal Medicaid funding is being used.
- To be eligible for modifications, a privately owned or rented house or apartment must be sanitary, safe, adequately maintained, and architecturally feasible for cost-effective modification methods.
- Routine home maintenance such as cleaning, painting, roof repair/replacement, gutter clearing, pest control, plumbing repairs, water damage repairs, floor repairs, appliance repairs, and yard work are not provided as environmental modifications. These issues are the responsibility of the homeowner or landlord/tenant.
- Modifications are provided only to improve an individual's safety and functional independence in his/her home. Requests will only be considered for essential modifications, such as an entrance/exit ramp, widening of selected exterior/interior doorways, flooring to facilitate wheelchair movement, alterations to make a bathroom accessible, etc. Environmental modifications may also include consultation and assessment to determine the specific needs and follow-up inspections upon completion of the project.
- Home additions (addition of square footage) are not allowed.
- Due to significant differences in the framework and flooring support structures used in mobile homes and manufactured housing, conventional ceramic tile showers/floors cannot be provided. The most appropriate and cost-effective solution is a pre-fabricated accessible shower unit.
- Upgraded and expensive materials and fixtures, such as decorative marble or tile flooring/walls, brass faucets, wallpaper, etc., are not permitted.
- When modifications are not feasible because of architectural, sanitary, or other basic habitability considerations, DSN Boards may offer alternatives such as assistance in securing accessible public housing or another rental dwelling. Once this is done, if there remains a need for modifications, three new written bids must be obtained.
- The individual and any family members or other persons who live in the home or would otherwise be affected by the completed modifications must be in full agreement on what work will be done before the request can be approved. Therefore, the individual and other homeowner/landlord must sign an agreement about the modifications before services can be authorized.
- Environmental modifications must be completed by a licensed contractor and comply with all local building ordinances. Three or more written bids must be obtained and the lowest used.
- If unforeseen structural problems or damage are discovered after a modification project has started that resulted from pre-existing maintenance neglect, plumbing leaks, improper drainage, or termites, it will be the responsibility of the homeowner/landlord to correct the structural problems or damage before the modifications can continue.
- If any of the outlined specifications given to you by your Service Coordinator/Early Interventionist cannot be met due to architectural designs, you must notify your Service Coordinator/Early Interventionist prior to authorization of the project.
- If the planned modifications include a ramp, ramp repair, widening of doorways and/or interior floor surface modifications, your Service Coordinator/Early Interventionist must submit to you the written requirements that must be adhered to when the contractor is preparing the bid and later when the project is initiated and completed. You will be responsible for sharing this information with the providers from which you are requesting bids. They must also be given the written specifications that you developed with your Service Coordinator/Early Interventionist or a copy of the Environmental Assessment, if applicable.

S.C. DEPARTMENT OF DISABILITIES AND SPECIAL NEEDS
COMMUNITY SUPPORTS WAIVER

Environmental Modifications Project Agreement

- 1) ☐ I understand that the requested environmental modifications are being funded with public money. This consists primarily of federal Medicaid funding and a smaller portion of state funding.
- 2) ☐ I have seen and agreed to the specifications for the requested environmental modifications. I understand that only what is in the approved specifications will be provided and funded.
- 3) ☐ I understand that under South Carolina state procurement law, the requested environmental modifications project must be awarded to the lowest qualified bidder.
- 4) ☐ I agree that I will not request or instruct the contractor to change any of the approved specifications after the project is awarded.
- 5) ☐ I agree that any additional work performed by the contractor must be separately negotiated between the contractor and homeowner and will be the sole financial responsibility of the homeowner.
- 6) ☐ I agree to work cooperatively with the contractor to insure a positive working relationship during the course of the project.
- 7) ☐ I agree to be available during the project if the contractor needs to take measurements of me or my wheelchair or ask questions to insure I will benefit from these modifications.
- 8) ☐ I understand that I must notify my Service Coordinator immediately if any unforeseen problems occur during the project.
- 9) ☐ I understand that if pre-existing home/property maintenance conditions or structural problems that affect the requested environmental modifications are identified after the project begins, work must be suspended until the problems are adequately resolved. I agree that it is the responsibility of the homeowner to correct these problems.

I have read, understand, and agree to each of the above terms. I also understand that the requested environmental modifications cannot proceed without my signature below.

Signature of Community Supports Waiver Individual
(if age 18 years or older)

Date

OR

Signature of Parent/Legal Guardian/Homeowner

Signature of Service Coordinator/Early Interventionist

Date

SC Department of Disabilities and Special Needs

Community Supports Waiver

Acknowledgment of Bid Submission for Environmental Modifications

Provider/Contractor: _____

Address: _____

Community Supports Waiver Individual: _____

Service Coordinator/Early Interventionist: _____

The _____ (DSN Board/Service Coordination Provider) has received your bid in the amount of \$_____ for environmental modifications that are proposed for the above named Community Supports Waiver individual. Your bid will be reviewed along with others submitted. If your bid is approved, you will receive written authorization from your Service Coordinator. **Under no circumstance should you begin work on these environmental modifications without written authorization from your Service Coordinator.** Community Supports Waiver funding cannot be used to pay for a service that was initiated or provided prior to authorization. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to me at the number noted below.

Service Coordinator/Early Interventionist: _____

DSN Board/Provider: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

Signature: _____ Date: ____/____/____

Original: Provider/Contractor

Copy: File